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SIPDIS

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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS_KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

11. Mideast

12. Iraq

Key stories in the media:

All major media reported that police last night halted thousands of anti-disengagement activists at the Peduim junction two km west of Ofakim after the demonstration departed the Negev town in an attempt to reach Gush Katif. Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that hundreds of people managed to infiltrate Gush Katif.

Maariv cited the belief of senior IDF officers that the army will have no choice but to embark upon a large-scale offensive in the Gaza Strip before the evacuation of settlements starts. The newspaper reported that the army has started increasing the number of its forces in the Strip.

Leading media reported that PM Sharon decided on Wednesday to submit a proposal to the cabinet for approval on Sunday, according to which the isolated Gaza Strip settlements of Netzarim, Kfar Darom, and Morag would be the first ones to be evacuated. This does not match the calendar planned by the IDF. Yediot reported that Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz will propose in the coming cabinet meeting to decide, along with the vote on the implementation of disengagement, to declare a national day of mourning on the day of Gush Katif's evacuation.

Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday, Sharon devoted more than six hours to discussions on the future joint "customs and tax envelope" for the Gaza Strip, Israel, and the West Bank. He also addressed the critical question of control over crossings with the Strip after the implementation of disengagement. The newspaper says that Sharon refrained from revealing positions, but said, "The easier we make it to cross from Egypt into Gaza, the harder it will be leave Gaza for Israel and the West Bank. Ha'aretz cited four options in the matter, which were presented by Giora Eiland. Each alternative is supported by a different cabinet minister.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post quoted Palestinian officials as saying that 30 Egyptian security officers arrived in Gaza on Wednesday to help train 5,000 Palestinian police officers to ensure order there after an Israeli withdrawal.

Ha'aretz's English web site reported that the Construction and Housing Ministry issued two tenders today for the building of 72 housing units in the settlement of Betar Ilit, which is situated between Jerusalem and the Etzion Bloc of settlements in the West Bank. The site and Israel Radio also reported that on Wednesday, Health Minister Danny Naveh (Likud) submitted a proposal to Cabinet Secretary Yisrael Maimon urging the government to approve building a new Jewish neighborhood between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim as part of a construction plan known as E-1. Naveh was quoted as saying that the plan is meant to prevent 'a Palestinian stranglehold' around Jerusalem and is especially necessary at this stage in order to strengthen Jewish settlements and security in the West Bank while the government simultaneously evacuates settlers from the Gaza Strip.

Ha'aretz quoted Jerusalem police chief Ilan Franco as saying Wednesday, during a High Court of Justice hearing on the separation fence, the crossings to be built in Jerusalem as part of the separation fence will actually improve the lives of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Israel Radio cited a GOI warning to Israelis about traveling to Jordan, following information that terrorist organizations could carry out attacks in the kingdom, as the Jordanian security services have reportedly arrested 11 Al-Qaida activists.

All media recall that Mauritanian President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, who was deposed Wednesday, is a "close friend of Israel" (as in Ha'aretz). This morning, Israel Radio reported that the Foreign Ministry has decided not to close the Israeli Embassy in Nouakchott.

Yediot cited a "Newsnight" BBC-TV report broadcast Wednesday, which said that, unbeknown to the U.S. administration, the UK supplied Israel with 20 tons of heavy water in 1958.

Yediot led with a report made public by the GOI's Central Bureau of Statistics on Wednesday, which found that the gap between rich and poor in Israel greatly increased in 2004. Yediot and Maariv cited a World Bank index, analyzed by the BDI economic group, according to which Israel is the most corrupt (80.8 percent on the BDI index) of Western states (average: 91.4 percent).

I1. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "D-Day, when Israel will decide in favor of sane, sovereign democracy and against messianic zealotry, is indeed approaching."

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Palestinians want arms in order to show power within their society, while Israel is firm in its belief that a rifle that is in Arab hands in the first act, will necessarily fire at Jews in the third act."

Very liberal columnist Yehuda Litani wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "This disengagement is not even the beginning of a reconciliation process, but rather a move of deceit and cunning."

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Can we admit that we think a great, great thing is about to happen in this country?"

Block Quotes:

II. "You Want Trauma? Fine"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (August 4): "On Tuesday ... teenagers from some of the Gush Katif settlements announced that they plan to commit suicide on the day of the evacuation.... Settlement leaders have not hidden their intentions. They say explicitly that they want to 'sear' the public consciousness with a trauma so severe that a move such as the disengagement will never happen again.... All that remains is to tell the 'exiles,' the potential suicides and their friends: you want trauma? Fine. Don't threaten. On the contrary: wear sackcloth, pour ashes on your heads, cry out in a mighty voice and declare your mourning. Anyone who hurts himself or others is responsible for his own actions -- not the army, the police or the government. D-Day, when Israel will decide in favor of sane, sovereign democracy and against messianic zealotry, is indeed approaching. That, therefore, is what settler extremists should 'sear' into their consciousness: the disengagement will happen, and Israel, if it wants to survive, will also seek to continue the process."

II. "Conflict at a 5.56 Millimeter Caliber"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 4): "The Palestinians have been warning for some time that the Palestinian police and the security services, or what

is left of them after nearly five years of systematic dismantling by Palestinian and Israeli hands alike, lack arms and ammunition. Extremely high-placed Palestinians said this to U.S. General Ward months ago, and others conveyed the message to senior Israeli officials.... In Israeli eyes, this is nonsense that shows how deceitful the other side is and how naive the Americans are. So you lack arms? Says the Israeli rationale to its regular partner in dialogue, that is, to itself -- you can get it from Hamas.... The Israeli consciousness, not only on the Right, which objected to the decision to give them guns, found peace for itself over the past five years, with great effort and at a bloody price, deep within the policy of 'there is no partner.' The objective truth is unclear. What is certain is that anyone who seeks to carry out terror attacks does not lack guns and ammunition. There will be enough rifles and bullets for those who wish to wreak terror on the roads, just as explosives are not the problem of those who wish to stage suicide bombings. What stands behind this debate is pure symbolism of disbelief: the Palestinians want arms in order to show power within their society, while Israel is firm in its belief that a rifle that is in Arab hands in the first act, will necessarily fire at Jews in the third act."

III. "The Morning After"

Very liberal columnist Yehuda Litani wrote in *Yediot Aharonot* (August 4): "Sharon wishes to create a new map of settlement blocs in the West Bank, opposite Palestinian enclaves such as Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin, which will be connected by roads, not by geographical contiguity. Even if Israeli army forces are not posted within these enclaves, Israel will continue to control the territories by remote control and will send in troops when necessary. In such a situation, the Palestinian Authority under Abu Mazen's leadership will be weakened even further, and the anarchy in the West Bank will increase.... [In the future], instead of gradually dying out, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be re-ignited time after time due to the actions for strengthening the settlement blocs in the West Bank.... This disengagement is not even the beginning of a reconciliation process, but rather a move of deceit and cunning: evacuating a small part in return for building and settling in a much larger part. The comparison between Sharon's disengagement initiative and De Gaulle's giving up Algeria in the early 1960s is inapplicable. From the beginning of his term as president at the end of the 1950s, De Gaulle knew that the battle for Algeria was lost. In contrast to him, Sharon believes that Israel will continue to control most of the West Bank territories, and what he has done until now in the chess game between us and the Palestinians is to sacrifice a pawn or a bishop in order to protect the queen's life. The morning after disengagement will not look rosier than the present mornings."

IV. "Why the Long Faces?"

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in conservative, independent *Jerusalem Post* (August 4): "I'd like to see one TV anchor in this country introduce a story on the Gush Katif settlers without the mandatory pained expression on his face.... The key word here is 'mandatory.' The message going out to the Israeli public via the mainstream media is that the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria [the northernmost part of the West Bank] is to be treated like a funeral, like Yom Kippur.... The whole Western world is congratulating Israel on getting out of Gaza, on finally doing the right thing, the smart thing, the best thing for Palestinians and Israelis alike -- and here in Israel the Jews are doing their damnedest to be miserable.... Can we admit that we think a great, great thing is about to happen in this country? Can we stop trying to exaggerate and exaggerate the sympathetic hurt we feel for the settler families being dislocated, and instead start to -- dare I say it? -- celebrate? Yes, there is one genuine source of pain in this story -- the 8,500 settlers being forced to move. They are definitely deserving of every Jew's sympathy. But this has gone way, way out of proportion."

12. Iraq:

Summary:

editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "As more caskets are removed from cargo planes ... America will bite the hands of those who sent it to war."

Block Quotes:

"And Slowly Creeps Death"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 4): "On Wednesday, seven U.S. soldiers were killed in Baghdad, and 14 more on Thursday. Who cares, except the bereaved families? The Americans, the world, Israelis are shrugging their shoulders and moving on to the next item in the newspaper, on the radio and television.... As more caskets are removed from cargo planes ... and as more tears run down from children who lost their fathers, America will bite the hands of those who sent it to war (for those who have forgotten, this is what happened during the Vietnam War)."

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